



his year's winners are no strangers to the term 'culture crossing' – they won the same category in the BBC Radio 3 Awards for World Music in 2008 for their debut album *Soul Science* (reviewed in #48). "A lot of the music I've done over the years has fallen between genres," says Justin Adams. "So it's just really nice when people give you a bit of a lift and say we've heard what you're doing and think it's OK." His musical partner, Gambian singer and *ritti* (one-stringed fiddle) player Juldeh Camara was equally happy: "I'm very, very pleased. It was a big surprise – I love that kind of surprise!"

The entrancing combination of African and Western rhythm & blues really ignites in their live performance. Adams lopes around the stage brandishing his guitar looking like the archetypal rock'n'roll star, while Camara cuts a striking figure in his Fulani robe, making incredible sounding riffs on his *ritti* – together they produce a hypnotic, raw and grooving sound. "What's really exciting when I play with Juldeh is that the audience becomes part of the performance. If they really respond to a certain thing, then we'll give it to them again, or if they're all dancing to a particular song, that song will become twice as long." It's this spontaneous, seemingly improvised style of playing that's

CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATION

Justin Adams & Juldeh Camara



the key to their success. "We are basically making it up as we go along!" says the self-deprecating Adams. "To me, that's a very natural way of going about things; to try and get a groove going and then playing on top of that – that's what I've been doing since I was a kid really. And that is Juldeh's system as a *griot*, that's what he does."

They've toured extensively over the past three years, playing at festivals as far afield as Siberia and Mexico. "A real highlight was playing at the Gnawa Festival in Essaouira. That was unbelievable." It was also a special moment for Camara too. "I just felt that I was back home. People in the audience were saying 'you are Gnawa!' That was my very best moment."

Their performance at WOMAD will be a bit different from their usual line-up: "We're going to present a bigger version of the band at WOMAD, as Mim Suleiman [from Rafiki Jazz] is going to be singing with us, and we'll have a bass player too!"

The project they're both most excited about is a plan to bring together a group of *ritti* players over from Gambia. "Usually we play four or five *rittis* together," explains Camara. "It's a magical sound. I want to bring my culture here in Europe, because I think people will be very, very impressed to see that." Camara is hoping to return to Gambia and make a start on the project this October: "*Inshallah*," he says. "I think it would be sensational," says Adams. "I really want to hear the sound of loads of *rittis* – it'll be a really wild sound, something like the musicians of Joujouka. We just need to get the funding." As Juldeh says, *inshallah*. ●

JF



ALBUM *Tell No Lies* was reviewed in #60

AWARD We will be presenting the award at WOMAD on July 24



BRUCE AMES